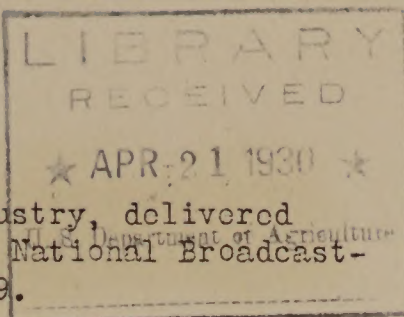


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MORE ABOUT PAPERING THE GARDEN



A radio talk by Dr. L. H. Flint, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered through WRC and 34 other radio stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company at 1:15 p.m., E. S. T., Wednesday, April 9, 1929.

Once again, spring fever is upon us.

The germs of this disease in its agricultural form were sent out with the seed catalogs, and now, even along our northern border, its symptoms are plain -- the characteristic wide band of south windows full of sprouting seeds.

What a life those seeds will live! Under the spell of the spring fever, we have planted them with high hopes. We shall follow their destinies bravely into the midst of hot weather, high weeds, and hosts of fungus and insect pests. Then, all of a sudden, we shall enter a period of intense agricultural depression -- and take a vacation.

Our garden, during the vacation, will probably depart this life, and when we return with renewed strength we shall do the simple and obvious thing -- buy vegetables from the grocer, and blame the vacation for the deplorable state of the garden.

What has this to do with paper-mulching? Only that the mulch paper offers a chance to cut down the garden casualties due to that vacation period.

During 1929, the second year of paper mulch in our agriculture, the area on which it was used increased tenfold -- to 5,000 acres from about 500 acres in 1928. There is every assurance that during 1930 many thousands of acres will be under the paper mulch system.

We shall have our difficulties in adapting the paper mulch idea to our gardens and truck fields. It was difficult enough to make it work in Hawaiian pineapple fields where the planters only had to find the principles of its use in one type of climate. We have to study paper mulch in relation to many crops and varied climate. We have only begun this study. On the other hand, the use of the mulch paper in pineapple culture showed us, before the practice ever was tried in this country, that plants could be grown without forever scratching the soil about them.

From a commercial viewpoint, there is much practical interest in the use of paper mulch in growing fresh vegetables, nursery stock, flowers, fruits, and nuts. A good deal of land will be papered this year for these commercial crops.

But the culture of these specialized crops is concentrated in small areas, so probably most of you are interested in paper mulch for use in home gardens. In 1929 there was scarcely a village in the eastern states without paper mulch so we have had one year of trial under varying conditions. But the system naturally approaches its third year without rules born of extensive local experience. Hence it is by no means fool-proof.

One of the things that troubles the novice most is finding methods of holding the paper down, and of keeping it from going to pieces early in the

summer. I think it is a distinct credit to the resourcefulness of Americans, and of American gardeners especially, that in the face of these difficulties, so many experimenters have got satisfactory results from paper mulch during the past two years.

Growers have tried the paper mulch irrigation and in swamp areas, in low lands, and at high altitudes, and at extremes of temperature and of moisture. Under all conditions some growers have used the system successfully.

It has been found that mulch paper saves labor, makes it possible to grow a greater variety of plants, hastens maturity (this is of especial interest to commercial operators), and help control and eradicate weeds.

In the short space of two seasons we can not have learned much about the most efficient methods of using mulch paper for each particular purpose. We may confidently look for more knowledge, and for better papers at lower cost. Paper mulch is one of the most radical departures made in recent times from time honored agricultural practices. It gives promise of becoming a valuable asset to some intensive phases of our agriculture, and to the home gardener.